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THE  
**SUPPORT OF SLAVERY**  
**INVESTIGATED.**

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By JAMES CROPPER.

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**T**HAT Slavery is unjust and inhuman, it is no longer necessary to prove, since its existence, as described by the friends of humanity, has been fully admitted by the regulations proposed by Government for its amelioration.

It is greatly to the honour of this country, that, independent of all considerations of policy, it has, on the grounds of humanity and justice alone, abolished the Slave-trade; and has now resolved to take such measures as will totally extinguish Slavery, at the earliest practicable period. It is, therefore, wholly unnecessary, as a motive for action in *this country*, to prove that the impolicy of Slavery is equal to its injustice; for be that as it may, its extinction is irrevocably decided upon.

It has now become important to consider the best means of effecting our object; for that would be greatly retarded if some of our plans are calculated to support and maintain, what others are intended to destroy; or if, whilst we are making laws for the gradual extinction of a system, we are affording to that system, by means of bounties, its only support. If, with the nature of the evil, are inseparably connected the means of its own

destruction ; and if these means have been retarded and counteracted by regulations of our own, made in ignorance of their nature and tendency ; how can we hope for success, if we allow these counteracting regulations to continue ?

If we find that in the nature of things, our all-wise Creator has decreed, that he “ who contradicts his will, shall disappoint his own ;” if he has set bounds to the progress of evil, and has said, “ Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further ;” shall man, with daring presumption, reject the means appointed by his Creator, and begin his work of reformation, by counteracting those means as far as he can ? If a beneficent Creator has inseparably connected interest and duty, shall man presume to call it an impure association ? If by means of this association, our object has in many cases been brought about, with undeniable safety and universal benefit, shall we commence our work, by attempting to rend it asunder ?

If these views are correct, it now becomes the duty of the friends of the Abolition of Slavery, and of the country at large, fully to investigate the whole nature of Slavery.

It is estimated by Baron de Humboldt, that there are in different parts of the Western world, no less than 5,637,400 of the African race, still held in degrading bondage ; of these, little more than one-eighth part are in the dominions of Great Britain ; shall, then, that feeling of benevolence, which, in other objects, knows no bounds, be in this case, confined to the narrow limits of the British dominions ? Where can there be such a field for the circulation of the Scriptures, or the diffusion of Christian light, as amongst a people held in heathen darkness, by the professors of Christianity.

If benevolent or virtuous feeling is strong enough, without any other motive, to effect the extinction of Slavery in the British dominions, have we any good grounds for supposing the same motives will operate on other nations who hold a great part of these Africans in Slavery? Have the French, the Spaniards, or Portuguese, followed us in the abolition of the Slave-trade? From whence then, are these poor beings to hope for the restoration of their rights? can we do nothing for them? We can prove to the world at large, that Slavery is a bad and impolitic system; and that converting the Slaves into free labourers, will be a change nearly as advantageous, as the introduction of machinery in the spinning of cotton; and then we are as sure that the French will follow us in the one case, as they have done in the other!

That cultivation by Slaves is dearer than that by free men, has been so completely proved in "Hodgson's Letter to Say," as to make it unnecessary to advance anything more on that part of the subject, further than to give some explanations, and to remove some objections, that have been made.

It may be objected, that if Slave-cultivation was really so disadvantageous, those who are concerned in it would certainly discover it to be so, and their own interest would induce them to change it; nay, still more, if it were so impolitic and unprofitable, how is it possible that the people of Illinois should be so mistaken, as to wish to introduce it into that state? And if, as has been stated, land gradually increases in value, as the Slaves become free, how does it happen that the land-speculators of Illinois are the great advocates for the introduction of Slavery?

Sugar, produced by free labour in the East Indies, comes into free competition in many of the markets of Europe, with sugar cultivated by Slaves in the Brazils and Cuba, and yet they continue both Slavery and the

Slave-trade. How could this be, if Slave-cultivation was so disadvantageous ?

In reply to the first objection, it may be said, that an old system is frequently not improved until not only a better is known, but also until necessity compels its adoption, and, least of all, are men to be expected to make changes which involve a voluntary resignation of power and dominion over their fellow creatures. A bad system may exist as long as a very high price is obtained for the article produced. The high prices of tropical productions, on their first introduction into Europe, admitted of an expensive system. These prices were so high as to support Slave-cultivation, in the absence of the Planters from the management of their own concerns, an absence producing neglect, waste and extravagance, which could not succeed in any other branch of the agriculture, commerce, or manufacture, of this or any other country !

This absence has been attended with another misfortune. The wealth, the talent, and the influence of the Planters, residing in the mother country, have been able to avert from themselves the necessity of making those improvements, which circumstances would otherwise have compelled them to adopt. They were well aware that prices, which circumstances had reduced, might be again raised by a bounty ; that competition might be kept out by high and prohibitory duties ; and, accordingly, these were applied for and obtained. But these protections were found to be insufficient to prevent that general ruin, in which all those connected with the system were likely to be involved, after all that had been done to support it. Without turning to the real cause of their distress, or endeavouring to remedy the evils of the system, the planters again apply for an advance on the protecting duties, and an increase on the bounty. Had this been granted, it might have supported the system

for a few years longer ; but in all probability it would only have been for a few years, for the gradual destruction of the Slave population, as well as the deterioration of the soils they cultivate, would soon have caused the necessity of renewed application for further support ; but fortunately for the cause of humanity, and for the interest of the country, the attention of the public has been turned to the subject.

Having explained why Slavery can still exist in the British Islands, I come now to show why the introduction of Slavery may promote the interests of the land-owners, or rather land-jobbers of Illinois ; for the term land-owner, connected, as we are in the habit of considering it, with the permanent improvements of the country, conveys no adequate idea of the land speculator in a new state in America.

Land can have no value without people, and its fertility may be so great as to counterbalance the disadvantages of Slave-labour ; and where land is so easily obtained, a man will prefer working for himself, rather than as a hired labourer ; and hence the wages of free labourers may be so high as to be more expensive than the labour of Slaves ; and thus, notwithstanding the general disadvantages of the system of Slavery, it may promote the temporary views of the land-jobbers of the state of Illinois.

To the last objection, it may be replied, that the cultivation of sugar in India is neither aided by European skill nor capital ; that as to improvements, it may be considered in its infancy ; and that to contend with the cultivation of the Brazils and Cuba, would be to begin at the wrong end ; to do that first which was most difficult ; to destroy the best and mildest systems of Slavery, before it had destroyed the worst. One thing is certain, that after paying 10s  $\frac{1}{2}$  cwt. more duty than West India sugar,

it does come into consumption in this Country ; and from all the information that can be obtained, there is no doubt that when, to an abundant population, working for low wages on a most fertile soil, is added British skill and capital, sugar will be produced lower in India, than in any other part of the world.

Having endeavoured to remove some of the plausible, though groundless objections to the advantages of free labour, I shall next proceed to show some of the *peculiar* evils of the *British* Colonial system. It is an extraordinary fact, that whilst the British Planters are complaining that the price they are obtaining for their sugar is ruinously low, the Planters of the Brazils and Cuba are enabled to pay for the importation of fresh Slaves, out of prices lower by many shillings  $\varphi$  cwt. than those which the British Planters consider as ruinous.

It is no less extraordinary, that whilst the cultivation of Cotton has been nearly abandoned in the British Colonies, it has been extending at a rate beyond all precedent in the United States.

The distress of the British Planters, when contrasted with the comparatively flourishing condition of the Planters of the Brazils, Cuba, and the United States, appears chiefly to arise from the following causes :—

1st, A more severe system of treatment.

2nd, Higher rates of wages, from there being fewer free labourers.

3rd, Inferiority of soil, from deterioration.

4th, The absence of the Planters.

5th, The mortgage system.

In the Spanish and Portuguese Colonies, the Slaves are allowed one day in the week besides Sunday, and about thirty holidays, making in all one hundred and thirty-four days, whilst in some of the British Colonies, the allowance

is only seventy-eight, and in others, sixty-six or sixty-eight days. The Slaves have a right, by the Spanish law, to purchase their own freedom. In those Colonies, the great number of free labourers must tend to reduce the wages of labour, and hence, they do many things for themselves which the British Planters do not : they refine or clay their sugar ; they make their own cotton bagging, and the packages for their sugar.

Instead of attributing the cheapness of cultivation to these causes, and to the innumerable advantages of the residence of the Planters, it has been ascribed to the continued importation of Slaves : to prove this to be the cause of the difference, it must be shown that the British Planters would be benefited by the further extension of a losing business.

A continued importation of Slaves is an unequivocal proof that the price of produce has not reached its lowest point ; for it may be clearly shown, that the whole expense of importation is thrown away ; for good treatment will increase the Slaves without diminishing the produce, and therefore without expense to the master.

The time when a child has defrayed the expense of helpless infancy will vary according to the value of his labour. *A Professional Planter*, page 149, says, "that at the age of five or six they do enough to defray the expense of their support ;" and when the Slaves cultivate land for their ground-provisions, and provide food for their own children, they cannot have cost at that age more than 40s to 50s each. In the most unfavourable portions of the United States, where labour is of least value, and where most clothing is required, it is computed that they are clear to the master at twenty-one.—When the Slave-trade was in its vigour, the decrease was more rapid



than it now is ; and fully two Slaves must have been imported for one permanently added to the population. At this rate, it would have cost the United States at least £70,000,000 in the last thirty years more than it has done, thus to have supplied their population.

We have seen that high prices and fertile soils can support Slavery, and still higher prices may admit of the expensive system of importing Slaves ; but before assuming that it is advantageous, it ought to be proved that there is something so much more congenial in the soil, climate, or the habits of the people, on the coast of Africa, as to afford

1st, The waste of life; by wars on the coast, in procuring them ; on the passage ; and also in seasoning, when they have been landed on the other side of the Atlantic.

2nd, The expense of the wars, and of transporting them across the ocean.

3rd, A revenue to the African chief who sells them, and a profit to the Slave-trader, by whom they are transported ; and after all this, it should be borne in mind, that they are of less value than those bred on the spot, from being totally unacquainted with the language, and unused to the employments for which they are destined.

I have dwelt more at length on this part of the subject, in the comparison between the British Colonies and Cuba, and the Brazils, in order to place in a clear light the absurdity of the notion, that there is an advantage in the importation of Slaves.

In the principal Slave states in the United States, their laws are no better, and in some points worse, than in the British Colonies, and there are many instances of very cruel treatment ; but as the Planters most commonly grow their own corn, the allowance of food is more abundant than in some of the British Colonies, being eight quarts of corn weekly, besides some molasses and bacon.

By the amelioration law of the Leeward Islands, passed in 1798, which professes to be a measure "calculated to obviate the causes which hitherto may have impeded the natural increase of Negroes," it is enacted, that there shall be weekly provided for every Slave; nine pints (about seven or eight pounds) of corn or beans; or eight pints (about five pounds) of pease, or wheat, or rye flour; or Indian corn meal, or nine pints (about five pounds) of oatmeal; or seven pints of rice, or eight pounds of biscuit, or twenty pounds of yams or potatoes, and also one pound and a quarter of herrings, (about four herrings) to be distributed in such proportions as the owner may think proper. There are other articles enumerated, out of which the master has the choice of supplying his Slave; these are selected as being best known and admitting of comparison. In addition to this, a very trifling allotment of land, say forty feet square, is allowed, which may add about one-fifth to the quantity of ground provisions. On comparing this allowance of food, with that of a number of English and Irish prisons, it was found to be less than half the average, and is about one-half the allowance of the Bahamas, where, as might be expected, the Slaves are increasing.

It may be said, and no doubt with truth, that many masters allow their Slaves more food; but what can be expected from a community which would pass an amelioration law, and leave the allowance so lamentably deficient? We find that even the provisions of this law are not enforced, though it is acknowledged there are many defaulters. (*See Stephen on the Slavery of the West Indies*, page 100.) At what price can we expect to obtain our sugars, when we attempt to extract labour by the lash from such half-fed beings?

The constant tendency of soils to deteriorate under Slave cultivation, must be more felt in the British Islands, especially the smaller ones, than in the United States, where an

almost boundless extent of land admits of a change, as the soils wear out.\* To those who are at all acquainted with the Slave cultivation, either of the United States or of the West Indies, this deterioration is so well known, and so universally admitted, as to make any proofs unnecessary. Wherever Slaves are used, the master thinks comparatively little of sparing them, but has recourse to their sinews for every thing. Cattle, are, therefore, far less employed than they ought to be, and hence Slave countries are behind all others in agricultural improvements. Our own soils would wear out, if constantly cultivated, even with wheat, with barley, or with oats. But happily, the people of England are not Slaves ! they eat beef and mutton, they wear woollen cloth, and leather shoes. A demand for these articles promotes the introduction of cattle, and of green crops, which manure the soil, and preserve its fertility.

The non-residence of the Planters is a peculiar evil of the British Colonial system ; the improvement which would be made in the state of society, and of morals generally, by their residence on their own property, will be readily admitted.

That the residence of many of the land-owners of Ireland would improve their own revenues, and still more the condition of the Irish people, is a point which *few* would be found to dispute ; and on the other hand, that if they were to cultivate their own lands, and to attempt to raise cattle and corn by the agency of attorneys and overseers, they could not reasonably expect any revenues at all !— And in such a case, surely no one would be found to propose to give them a bounty to enable them to continue so improvident a system. As little could the manufacturers of Manchester expect to succeed, if their concerns were

\* See Relief for West Indian Distress, page 20 ; and an Impartial Appeal to the Inhabitants of Illinois, on the Injurious Effects of Slave Labour.

managed by agents, whilst they resided in London; and they could scarcely propose to be assisted in such a system by a bounty on their goods.

So long as this country in any degree tolerates within its own dominions, that opprobrious system, by which a man is allowed to hold his fellow-man as his property, it is bound to see that he acts in all respects consistent with the tremendous responsibilities of his situation. If the grower of corn, the breeder of cattle, or the spinner of cotton, cannot succeed without personal attention; how can he hope for success, who attempts to manage a concern through the agency of attorneys and overseers, in which his fellow-creatures are to be converted into brutes? And if we refused to give men bounties to enable them to neglect their corn, their cattle, or their spinning machinery, how much less should we be justified in doing it, when the objects of this neglect are our fellow creatures.

The mortgage system is also intimately connected with non-residence. In a petition to Parliament from the island of Antigua, in the last session, the produce and expenses of an estate are stated, in which about £250 is charged for oversight and management; the value of all its produce being, in the general markets of Europe, and unaided by English bounty, only about £1050 sterling. Let the English landowner say, if he could afford to pay such a sum for the oversight and management of 150 to 200 acres of land, which would yield as much gross produce; or if he did pay it, whether he would not soon be under the necessity of mortgaging his estate. When this is the case with the West India Planter, he is debarred from all the advantages of free competition, in the sale of his produce, or the purchase of his supplies; these must all go through the mortgagee.

To all these expenses and disadvantages of non-residence, must be added that which is still more important, the waste of Negro life from neglect or ill-treatment. The decrease in the last three years in the West India colonies, has been about 18,000, or  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. ; whilst the free people of colour, who are, of course, under their own management, and Slaves, in some instances, increase at the rate of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. per annum ; which is also about the rate of increase in the United States. Between a decrease of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. in 3 years, and an increase of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. per annum, there is a difference of  $3\frac{1}{4}$  per cent, which on 711,960 Slaves, the population of the British West Indies, would make about 23,000, which, at £50 each, would be £1,150,000; or fully 6s. 6d. per cwt. on 175,000 tons of sugar. Thus, is the full amount of the bounty thrown away in this one instance of neglect. Can we any longer be surprised, that the British planter can neither stand the competition of free labour, nor that of milder systems of Slave labour ?

Having endeavoured to remove some of the plausible objections to the advantages of free labour, and explained the cause of some of the peculiar disadvantages of the British Colonial system, I shall next proceed further to elucidate the nature of that state generally.

Slavery has been shown to be a bad and impolitic system, which could not continue in a free competition with better systems ; wherever, therefore, it does exist, it must owe that existence to some of the following circumstances :—

1st, High prices of produce, arising from an inadequate supply.

2nd, Scarcity of people on soils of great fertility.

3rd, Bounties or monopolies, to raise the price of the article artificially.

When all these circumstances are wanting, it is evident Slavery must die of itself; and to this cause, therefore, is the extinction of Slavery chiefly owing, where that system has ceased to exist. As this change would be gradual and progressive, so must the extinction of Slavery also have been. How unreasonable would it be to suppose, as some of the advocates of Slavery would have us to do, that as the system becomes less profitable, its severities would be increased; until (if we follow their reasonings) Slavery, having arrived at the utmost point of severity and oppression, would be transformed at once, by some tremendous shock, into freedom; and that at a time when the Slaves are least of all prepared for it. Such a supposition, would be a monstrous absurdity; and yet, such as it is, the Planters seem to have been able to persuade the people of this country to believe, and to act upon it. This error, like many others connected with the West Indian system, as the wearing out both soils and population, (when prices are high enough to afford it,) arises from the habit of looking more to temporary, than permanent advantages. There is no doubt, that the Planter, who has been in the practice of turning all his labour to the production of sugar, and buying the food for his Slaves, will, when the price of sugar declines, be very likely, not only to feed his Slaves less, but to work them harder; but the state of his affairs will soon convince him, that he must change his system, or be ruined; he will then grow his own provisions, and his Slaves will be better fed.

It was estimated by the Assembly of Jamaica, that during the continuance of the Slave-trade, say, from 1800 to 1808, the annual decrease or loss in the Slave population was about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. per ann. If we go still further back, we shall find it estimated by the Planters, in the days of

David Hume, at 5 per cent. per annum.\* Now, if we value the Slaves at £50 each, 711,000 would amount to about 35 millions sterling, which, at 5 per cent. would make £1,750,000, or 10s. per cwt. on 175,000 tons of sugar ; this is a waste that the present prices could not afford; but it is evident that the prices then were high enough to pay for it, or there could have been no Slave-trade. The dreadful nature of this system may be imagined, both on the score of humanity, and pecuniary loss, when we consider, that instead of a loss of 5 per cent, there might have been an increase of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. annually. To establish the hypothesis of the Planters, that the Slaves are treated better when their profits are greater, and worse when those profits are less, they must show, what they will scarcely admit, that they are now treated much worse, and that the annual decrease of the Slaves is more than 5 per cent. per annum.

Again, if they are to prove, that to give them high prices for their produce, is the means of improving the condition of the Slaves, and not only of fitting them for freedom, but of preparing their masters to give it to them ; they must show that there is some point, where the motives of men experience a sudden and unaccountable change ; but men of common understandings will not be easily convinced, that if the value of the Slave is advanced from £50 to £500, the point where his master would be willing to give him his freedom, is nearer, than if the price had declined from £50 to £5 ; and yet such is the absurdity to which this course of reasoning would lead us.

It would seem scarcely necessary to bring any particular fact to prove what is so self-evident, but it may not be amiss to corroborate it on West Indian authority. Marryatt, in his Reply, p. 43, says, “ Labour, in India, is of so little

\* See Review of the Registry Laws, page 74 ; and Negro Emancipation and West India Independence, the True Interest of Great Britain.

“ value, that probably these claims to servitude are not enforced, because they are not worth enforcing.” This will be found to have been one of the causes of the extinction of Slavery, wherever that has taken place, and will still continue to be so ; for whether men live in the East or the West, they will be much less disposed to enforce claims to servitude, when those claims are not worth enforcing. We know that the abolition of Slavery in the United States, commenced in the Northern parts, where there was most competition of free labour, and where Slave labour was of least value ; and that it has been gradually proceeding southward ; and in such of the Northern States, where Slavery still exists, it is only in its mildest form ; but it becomes more severe to the southward, where the profits of the system are greater. The abolition of Slavery in the new Republic of Columbia, was preceded by a low rate of wages ; its abolition in the Island of Ceylon, was more easily effected in consequence of the abundance and cheapness of the Slaves ; for we find they were not an article of importation, but of exportation. The low value of the American exports, seems to have led to the increase by breeding, while the comparatively high prices of the produce of the British Colonies supported the system of importation.\* But these proofs are still more important, when they can be obtained in the British West India Colonies ; I must, therefore, refer my readers to Stephen’s work on West Indian Slavery, Appendix No. 3, for an account of the better treatment and consequent increase in the Slave population of the Bahama Islands, where cultivation has become so much less profitable, that some of them have been sent to the more fertile soil of Demerara. Barbadoes is almost the only other Island where there

\* See my Pamphlet on the Injurious Effects of High Prices of Produce, and Beneficial Effects of Low Prices on the Condition of Slaves.



is an increase in numbers; and here, too, the Planters complain, that their soils are so much less fertile, that they cannot, as in some other colonies, afford to give up the Sabbath to their Slaves.

*Rich lands, high prices, and scarcity of people*, are the only supports of Slavery, and hence the reverse of all these must extinguish it.

When lands become so poor, and prices so low, that economy and good management are necessary, Slavery is fast approaching to its end, and, if left to itself, must soon cease.

When a population becomes so numerous that it is difficult to find employment, and wages become so low that it requires great industry and good management to earn a subsistence, here too Slavery will soon cease.

The free and extensive competition of free labour, either exerted in the same place or in any other, so that it meets the produce of Slave labour in the market for sale, must reduce the price of those products, and thereby render economy and good management necessary, and the substitution of free labour follows of course.

The continuance of Slavery may, however, be protracted far beyond the period when circumstances, if left to themselves, would have put an end to it; prices which would have been reduced to moderate rates, may, by bounties and prohibitions, be made high. And thus, Slavery may be continued, in its worst and most expensive forms; which, by ill treatment, reduces the numbers of the Slave population. Slave cultivation is every where known to exhaust and deteriorate the soil, and this would tend, if left to itself, where lands, as in our Islands, are in limited quantity, to correct the evils of Slavery; better management, improved treatment, and an increase in the Slave population, would be the consequence; but this too

may be counteracted by bounties; the price of produce may be raised high enough to pay even for bad management on a deteriorated soil.

In this way is the present system of Slavery in the British Colonies supported by the people of England, for British Plantation sugar sells in the home market about 6s per cwt. dearer than Foreign sugar of similar quality,\* which is owing to a high bounty paid on the exportation of the surplus in a refined state; by means of which bounty, the price of all British Plantation sugar is raised. This is a most important point, to which the friends of humanity should turn their particular attention. Slavery being unjust, inhuman, and unchristian, how can they, without the most pointed and urgent remonstrances, continue thus to support it?

If we are really in earnest about the extinction of Slavery, we should first examine by what means it is supported, for so long as these means continue to receive our sanction, or remain in operation, will it not be useless to make laws and regulations to put an end to Slavery?

Though Slavery has often been changed into freedom by slow and gradual means, yet in its present state in the West Indies, if the bounty and protecting duties, which support it, are withdrawn; it will, comparatively, soon come to an end, and that with perfect safety and manifest advantage to all parties. Are we then to begin our work of benevolence, by rejecting the old tried and safe systems which are certain to succeed; which are interwoven in the nature of things, and are evidently designed by the Creator to produce the most beneficial results, where higher motives

\* It is admitted in the letters of T. Fletcher, published by order of the Liverpool West India Association, that British Plantation sugar sells 5s per cwt. higher than Foreign sugar of similar quality. For particulars respecting this bounty, see *Relief for West India Distress*, page 4.

have failed. Shall knowledge, instead of being employed to hasten the progress of improvement, be exerted in order to sustain and continue the institutions of “*tyranny and ignorance*?”

But it will be said, the West Indians have been encouraged to invest their capital, depending on this support, and it would be unjust to withdraw it. This it will be difficult to prove, for it is remarkable that the West Indians never claim this bounty as a right, and do all they can to keep it out of sight. They were even unwilling to have a reduction in the duty, of which they have hitherto so loudly complained, lest it should lead to an investigation of this question of bounty: but whether entitled to it or not, they can have no reasonable objection to receive an equivalent in some other way. To pay a bounty for the support of a system long tried, and which proves to be a bad one, is doubtless bad policy. To the Country, it is an absolute loss, without any prospect of future advantage to repay it; to the Individuals to whom it is paid, it is not an advantage proportionable to what is paid by the country; it forces industry into a particular channel, even though a less profit should be realized, than the amount of the bounty paid. To the country it would be far preferable, to pay as a premium, for the promotion of improvement, the same sum which they are now paying to render a bad system perpetual; and to the Planters, paying the money direct into their pockets would be a manifest advantage, as it will allow them to cultivate any article they choose, and thus leave their exertions unshackled.

Let us suppose that the difficulties in the way of such an arrangement, will, on reflection, be easily removed; and what are the difficulties of that removal? The Planters do not even attempt to show any claim to this bounty; and if the people of England are willing to continue to them

a free gift, shall they not be allowed to choose their own mode of doing it? If this support were removed, and the ameliorations proposed by the unanimous vote of the House of Commons, were carried into effect, and an end put to the Slave-trade amongst our own Colonies, let us then trace what would be the operation of natural causes in effecting the extinction of Slavery.

If the Slaves are treated as human beings, they will increase as other human beings do; for so long as Slavery exists, there can be no distress from want of employment, (the common check to the increase of a free population,) for the want of employment would put an end to Slavery. Hence, if Slaves were well treated, they would increase fully as rapidly as free men; and from the numerous instances of the increase of Slaves and free Blacks in the West Indies,\* as well as in the United States, we might reasonably expect an increase of 25 per cent. in every ten years; whilst, on the present system, the population of our West India Colonies is decreasing at the rate of nearly 25 per cent. in thirty years. In the one case, the population of our Colonies, thirty years hence, would be about 1,400,000, a great proportion of whom would in all probability have become free; whilst, on the present system, the population of these same Colonies will be reduced to about 550,000 Slaves, who will have to work on a still more exhausted soil. What bounties, what sacrifices, will

\* The Slaves on G. Haynes' estate, in Barbadoes, increased from sixty-two, in the year 1797, to one hundred and two in the year 1816.—(*Mercator's Letters.*) Slaves removed from the Bahamas to Demerara, increased at the rate of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. per annum.—(See *Vindex's Letters.*) The increase of coloured people in Trinidad, from 1812 to 1821, was rapid, even after making all reasonable allowance for manumissions, and the addition of those who joined the British standard in the American war. The increase of the free coloured people in Jamaica, (see *Yates' Letter to Huskisson,*) and of the Maroons in Jamaica, (see *Negro Slavery*, No. IV. all show an increase of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. or upwards.

then be required to support the system? Can the two courses, which would produce two such different results, remain without the fullest investigation and inquiry?

Appalling as is the contemplation of so much human misery, occasioned unquestionably by some sort of ill treatment, as that which would destroy the lives, or prevent the existence, of 850,000 human beings, in so small a population, it is no visionary notion; it is no speculative calculation; but it is what has actually taken place in the British Colonies, as compared with the United States, in the last thirty years.

I do not know what was the population of Berbice, Demerara, St. Lucia, Tobago, and Trinidad, thirty years ago: they are now about 150,000; and if we take them then at 100,000, the population of the Colonies now in our possession, would have been about 560,000, and is now, notwithstanding all the importations, in the mean time, only 711,961. Now, had the importations into the United States been the same as into the British West India Colonies, which is an allowance far beyond probability, then the population of the British Colonies, with the same proportionate increase, ought to have been 1,320,000;\* for the United States had, in the year 1790,

\* It is impossible exactly to ascertain the amount of Slaves, either legally imported or smuggled into the United States. According to my information, there could be no legal importation from 1790 to 1800, and the value of their exports was, in the early part of that period, so low as to afford no inducement to importation, or temptation for smuggling. A part of the time, from 1800 to 1810, importation was legal into some of the States, and accordingly we find the increase greater in this, than either the preceding or succeeding period, by about 5 per cent. or about 45,000. From the embargo in 1808, when the trade was finally abolished, to the end of the war in 1814, there could have been no inducement to smuggle, from the extremely depressed prices of produce; and though there was some considerable smuggling for about three years after, it has since been almost entirely suppressed, so that it is probable the importations of the last thirty years, may not much have exceeded the manumissions in the same period.

a Slave population of 697,686, whilst, if we add 100,000 for the manumissions in thirty years, the Slave population in 1820 would have been 1,643,688.

To what, then, can this vast difference be owing? It is mainly to be attributed to the low value of the American exports, particularly in the early part of that period; for in the year 1790, the value of the exports from Jamaica, appears to have been about three times as great in proportion to the number of Slaves, as the exports of Slave-cultivated produce from the United States. In fact, if the law had allowed it, there would then have been no temptation to import Slaves. The American Slave-holders were compelled by necessity to resort to a more economical system, for the increase of their Slave population, more especially, after the cultivation of indigo became extensive in India, and before much cotton was grown in the United States. When, however, the cultivation of cotton became extensive, the value of Slave-produce exported greatly increased, the temptation to import more Slaves from Africa, became too strong to be resisted; and some of the States which had before abolished the Slave-trade, again opened their ports to this infamous traffic.

After this additional confirmation, that the oppressions and severities of the Slave system, increase with its profits, and diminish with their reduction, little further needs surely be said of the necessity of investigating the policy

There has been, and still continues, a notoriously extensive Slave-trade from Maryland, Virginia, &c. for the supply of the southern states; this, together with manumissions, has kept the Slave population of Maryland nearly stationary for the last thirty years; and that of Virginia has only increased in the three periods, 19, 13, and 8 per cent.; the highest of which rates must be much under the natural increase, for the abolition laws would be as carefully watched in these Slave-breeding states, as the corn-laws would be in our corn-growing counties: in short, the natural increase of the Slave population in the United States, is a matter not only of public notoriety, but of alarm, and is generally taken at  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. or upwards.

of giving a bounty for the support of a system, which not only destroys the people, but the soils on which they labour, and which has, in an equal degree, sacrificed the commercial interests of the country; for going no further back than the year 1808, when the Slave-trade was abolished in Great Britain and the United States, we find the exports of Cotton from the latter have much more than doubled, whilst the exports of Sugar from the *old Colonies* have decreased, and from the whole Colonies have been nearly stationary.

In the oldest British Colonies, with the exception of Jamaica, the population, thirty years ago or more, was greater than it now is; and we may, therefore, presume it is as numerous as, under present circumstances, they have occasion for. If, therefore, 25 per cent. were added to their population, in ten years they must find other employment; or make them free, and let them seek it for themselves. In this way it is evident, that if the sale of Slaves from Virginia and Maryland were prohibited, Slavery in those States would soon come to an end.

In Barbadoes, Antigua, Montserrat, Nevis, and St. Kitts, according to B. Edwards, the number of acres under cultivation was about 177,000, and the number of Slaves about 141,000; and if to these were added the Whites and the free coloured people, we should probably have about one person to every acre of land under cultivation, being somewhere about double the proportion of our population in England, though only about one-third of the people are here employed in agriculture. The cultivation, in the two cases, is doubtless very different, yet this fact affords strong grounds for believing that if cattle were more used, and the people were free, the present population of many of the Islands would greatly exceed what would be necessary for their cultivation.

The Planters having a surplus population, would follow the example of the Spaniards and Portuguese; they would make their own bricks, and the packages for their sugar and cotton; they would refine or clay their sugars, and make every thing for themselves, which they could so obtain with more advantage and less expense than by importing; and in the present state of knowledge, no obstacles would be raised in the mother country, to their doing any thing which would be for their advantage, as it is immaterial to this country in what way they take payment for their sugars.

During this state of things, the industry, the knowledge, and the habits of the Slaves would be constantly improving by extended and varied employments; and necessity, or a desire to enjoy the fruits of their labour, would soon be found to operate just the same in warm as in cold climates; and would be gradually, but constantly, fitting them for freedom, at the time when, from an increase of their numbers, or other circumstances, they would cease to have any saleable value; and when it would be a great hardship on their masters to compel them any longer to hold them in slavery.\*

Thus would Slavery terminate in those British Colonies, at least, where land is in limited quantity, from the operation of the same causes, which have been the chief means of bringing it to a termination in those countries where it has now ceased to exist; and the proprietors would, at every step, find the value of their property increasing, by a gradual transfer of value from the Slaves to the land.†

\* In the United States, Virginia for example, there are laws compelling the Planters to retain their Slaves in Slavery, or if made free, to export them.

† See Hodgson's Letter to Say, p. 12.



And if the quantity of produce was not increased, its cost would be lessened by economical management.

Though the severities of Slavery, would thus in general lessen, and the state itself terminate by the operation of natural causes alone, yet, without the aid of salutary laws and regulations, there would be many cases where these severities and oppressions would linger long after the time when it would have been reasonable to expect their termination.

The Order in Council for the Island of Trinidad, when some of its obvious defects are improved, is a very salutary measure, and well calculated to meliorate the condition of the Slaves, and the means which are thereby opened to them of purchasing their own freedom, is an unquestionable advantage; but let us not hope too much from its operation; it is only opening to them the same means which are open to the labouring poor of England and Ireland, of becoming land owners. To purchase a house for his own dwelling, is a task quite as easy to the English labourer, as for a Slave to purchase his freedom; and yet by how few is this object effected?

The Slave has surely strong claims on the country, to be aided in his exertions to emancipate himself; but on the contrary, how unjust is our conduct towards him; for all bounties paid on the produce of his labour add to his price, and to the difficulty of extricating himself from his degrading bondage. If the labour of a Slave produces ten cwt. of sugar annually, and we increase the price of that sugar 6s per cwt. by bounty, we add £3 per year to his value, and, if taken at ten years purchase, we are thus adding £30 to his price, or giving so much to hinder, instead of assisting in the purchase of his freedom. If these artificial supports to Slavery had no other evil tendency than this; the

justice, the sincerity, and consistency of the country, require that they should be swept away.

If the nature of Slavery, and the causes which have led to its termination in our own country, and in various other parts of the world, are not sufficiently understood, the Legislature should appoint a commission of inquiry, or a committee for investigation; for it would be unreasonable to expect any important effects from our measures, so long as we continue to *counteract* that course of events, which it ought to be our first object to *assist*.

On this account, it would probably not be any cause of regret, if the Colonial legislatures should, in the first instance, refuse to follow the example set them in the Island of Trinidad, and reject the recommendations of the mother country. In such case, our course would be perfectly clear: we should then cease to continue to them the absurd system of bounty, which has been abandoned in every other case; if they will not adopt our plans of amelioration, we shall surely cease to pay the expense of the oppression of our fellow creatures. The bounty might be *gradually* withdrawn, thereby allowing the proprietors of estates sufficient time to effect the necessary improvements in the system, for the immediate and total extinction of the bounty might create confusion, by rendering some estates not worth cultivation.

A direct annual bounty, (equal to the bounty on sugar withdrawn,) paid to the proprietors, not on their produce, but on the number of their Slaves, in those Colonies which adopted the plans of amelioration, would be a large premium for inducing these improvements, and might be the means of relieving many of the Planters, not only from the shackles of mortgage, but also from being tied to the cultivation of one particular article to obtain the bounty.

Since the evils of Slavery are so generally seen and acknowledged; since the mode of its extinction is so clear, safe, and certain; may we not hope that the time is not far distant, when the country, shaking off the trammels in which her energies have been bound, for the support of this odious system; adopting more enlightened views, and acting under the conviction, that commerce, which is an exchange of the comforts of civilized life, will be increased in proportion to the extension of knowledge and improvement; shall cease to think, that she can reap any advantage, from the degradation or oppression, of any part of the human race, and, least of all, of her own subjects; when she will no longer sanction those absurd commercial regulations by which she rejects sugar when produced by the African on his own native and fertile soil, and at the same time gives a bounty on the produce of his labour when he is converted into a Slave, held in subjection by military force, and compelled to cultivate the exhausted soils of our West India Islands.

I rejoice in seeing the general reprobation of the *whole system of bounties*, even of those for which some plea might perhaps be admitted, as assisting to establish an infant commerce, in the hope of being hereafter repaid by greater benefits to the country; and surely if there ever was a case, in which the continuance of an old, or the establishment of a new bounty could be defended, it would be that of *supporting the industry of Ireland*, where there is a population of nearly 7,000,000, a great proportion of whom are driven by extreme distress, to acts of outrage and barbarity, but who are anxiously desiring employment. The giving a bounty for the establishment of a new business, as the spinning of linen in the southern parts of Ireland, presupposes that such a

trade would be a benefit ; and if on trial, it should prove not to be so, then we must either continue the bounty to our own loss, or abandon a business to the loss of those who, by the bounty, had been induced to enter into it.

On these grounds I approve of the gradual abandonment of the bounty on Irish linens ; but is it fair to Ireland that we should stop here ? that, in removing every other bounty, and not retaining that which in some degree encourages her industry, we should not only take from her the little pittance she thus receives, but at the same time make her pay her proportion to a bounty greater in amount, and worse in its consequences, than all other bounties put together ? a bounty, which, in conjunction with other restrictions, binds down the commercial energies of the country ; holds the Slaves in the West Indies, in chains of ignorance and darkness, and prevents the general diffusion of knowledge and civilization, (which would necessarily follow unrestricted commerce,) over the vast regions of Africa and of India ?